

THE AUTHORS SHOW – Children

Author: Angie Flores

My writing journey was set in motion from the needs of my three little boys. As an HR Manager, I would work 10 – 12 hour days, then come home and cook dinner while still wearing my purse. When the kids were ready for bed, I'd tuck them in and start to read their favorite books. Unfortunately, I could never get past the first few pages without falling asleep.

To stay alert and not miss out on this precious time, I began to ask for different animals and situations – sparks to make up a story on the spot. It worked, but (as most kids) they wanted to hear the same story again and again. The problem was, I was so fatigued that I couldn't remember half of what I created! Finally, I started recording the stories and making notes so I could read an encore if needed.

One day, my youngest son told his first grade teacher that I wrote stories – based on the notes he would see me writing. With his teacher's encouragement, I read my stories to his class. Clutching my spiral notebook with a few pictures I had pulled from the internet, I performed my first reading.

Granted, children love being read to, no matter the subject. But my stories seemed to relate to the children's curiosities. They were asking questions and laughing in all the right places, Why not move forward and give writing a try?

By then I had written 20 stories and wasn't sure what to do with them, how to take the next step.

One morning, I Googled "how to publish a children's book." The very first thing that appeared was an event notice: "TODAY! Kick Start Your Writing Career with the Children's Books Writers of Los Angeles (CBW-LA)." The location was less than three miles from my home, so I took it as a sign.

That meeting changed my whole way of thinking about what I wanted to do. The presenter explained both traditional and self-publishing, and what to expect once I choose a path. I was hungry for the knowledge and knew story telling was for me.

Over time, I became involved with the group, attending critique sessions and workshops, all the while working on my stories, querying agents, and receiving constructive feedback. Eventually I was asked to be on the board.

While working with the CBW-LA, I helped produce annual Writing Day workshops, each culminating in an anthology. That was where I received my first writing credits. My work was published in Story Sprouts and Story Sprouts: Voice, with additional publications in development. Our biggest project, and my first middle grade novel credit, was the collaborative novel Kayla Wayman, *Junior Time Traveler: Lost in the Stream*.

The book launch was so exciting to be a part of, but I still had my own work to share. I wanted something more, something to call my own.

To realize my dream, I needed to find an illustrator. But I was low on finances. I contacted the local high school art teacher to see if he would like to illustrate my stories. Instead, he suggested using the stories as a lesson plan on illustration. That way I could see if my words connected with the artist. When he presented his student's illustrations to me, I was amazed! The stories had finally come to life.

One student's work gave me goose bumps. Yidan Yuan had perfectly captured the essence of the story, the tenderness of the parent and child. I had to have her illustrate the story.

The adventure was truly about to begin.

With a mock-up in hand, friends came from all over offering their talents to see my work completed and my dream achieved. From editing to formatting, choosing a printer, getting Cub's Wish listed on Amazon, website development to marketing, I felt so blessed with the many hands that offered to help.

The day the book was launched, it shot up to #2767 out of the 11 million+ books on Amazon, and received #1 New Release and Best Seller status. Amazon sold out within the first 10 hours of launch.

A physical launch party followed, where I sold another 100 books. Immediately, requests came in to speak at schools and events. Local stores agreed to carry the book, and it was a best seller for three consecutive months at Pipe & Thimble Bookstore.

Throughout its first year, Cub's Wish won several children's book awards and earned honorable mentions and five star ratings. ChildrensPublishing.com named Cub's Wish one of the top seven books that teach kindness to children, and was a certified "Great Read" from the #1 rated iTunes podcast, Reading With Your Kids.

My husband, suited as my Panda Pal mascot, assists me at festivals, hospital readings, and store events. We were invited to lead off the Hollywood Riviera Holiday Parade, driven in a vintage Mercury Cougar, and appeared in the televised San Pedro Holiday Parade. I was honored to be the first author in history to appear in each parade. Sometimes it feels crazy to think of all that has happened since inventing those first stories for my boys.

The new year brought a challenge. With my next book still in production, I decided to take Cub's Wish as far as I could. On the one year anniversary, with the help of a dear friend, I launched the e-book version of Cub's Wish. It hit #1 Best Seller and #1 New Release on Amazon, which reassured me I am still on the right track.

Recently, I had Cub's Wish translated into Braille for sight impaired parents and children. The book is currently being made into an audio book, and will be published in Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Japanese, Korean, French, Italian and Arabic. I want Cub's message to reach readers around the world!

With a renewed sense of confidence, thanks to speaking on several podcasts, radio shows, cable TV, and YouTube, as well as earning The Author Show's "Top Female Author of Children's Books" and the honor of being invited to sit on the board of Reading is Fundamental (RIF), I will release two new books in 2018 and 2019.

There have been many successes and challenges along the way, and yet I believe my story is still just beginning. I can't wait to influence my readers positively through the messages of each new story to come.

It's not always about how much you have; it's what you do with it that matters.

This is my message. It resonates throughout my stories and is my mantra on this amazing journey.